

Charter Act of 1813 and the Introduction of Western Education in India

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Abstract:

The British administration in India witnessed significant changes in the cultural life of the people. The Indians never ignored learning; they had their traditional system of education. One should not, however, suppose that in India there had been no educational system before the coming of the British. As a matter of fact, when the British came to India and were gradually establishing themselves in India, they met such a system. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence". The trend of ancient education influences the trend of religious thought. Also in India, the practice of Sati and the use of seclusion or Purda were in use. The foremost among the Company officials who attacked these abuses was Charles Grant. Grant had come to India in 1767. As a remedy to all these evils, Grant suggested a "healing principle", namely, the supersession of the existing religions by Christianity, through the dissemination of the science and literature of Europe, "A key which would at once open a world of new ideas" to them. Grant stated that the ling intercourse between the Indians and the Europeans in India rendered it feasible to use the English language as the medium of instruction. Moreover, he said, knowledge of the English language would immediately place the whole range of European knowledge within their reach, while translation of English books into the Indian languages would take a long time and would be less efficacious. Grant also urged the substitution of English for Persian as the official language because that would induce the Indians to learn it. He urged the establishment of English schools under teachers "of good moral character," hoping that very soon the public taught in these schools would themselves become the teachers of English to their countrymen.

Key Words: British, Charter Act, Education, English, East India Company, Regulation.

Introduction:

Charter Acts were a series of four acts passed by the British Parliament between 1793 and 1853 (1793, 1813, 1833, 1853) to renew and regulate the East India Company's trade monopoly and administrative control in India every 20 years. They transitioned the Company from a trading entity into a subordinate administrative body, strengthening the Crown's control. The Charter Act of 1813 was a significant legislative act passed by the British Parliament. It extended the British East India Company's charter for another 20 years while making several significant changes to reflect the changing dynamics of British governance in India. This Act is regarded as a forerunner in the modernization of India's administration and economy, laying the groundwork for subsequent reforms.

Charter Act of 1813:

The Charter Act of 1813 provided an annual expenditure of one lakh of rupees “for the revival and promotion of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories. The main factor that tipped the scales in favour of the English language and Western literature was the economic factor. Indians wanted a system of education that would help them earn their livelihood. Progressive Indian elements also favoured the spread of English education and Western learning.

The Charter Act 1813 may be regarded as a turning point in the history of Indian education. It was for the first time that the British Parliament recognized the importance of education and set aside a definite sum of money for its encouragement. Till now the Company did not regard itself responsible for educating the Indian people. After 1813 it became its sacred duty to do so. A sufficiently large amount of sum hence forth began to be set aside annually for the propagation of education.

The Charter of 1813 is also important because the missionaries received full freedom for proselytizing and conducting educational activities as they chose. It was after this date that missionaries began to rush into India and establish schools and colleges. The foundation of the modern education system was thus laid.

But the Charter of 1813 did not specify how the sum of rupees one lakh was to be spent. Consequently, controversies sprang up. The main issues were:

- (1) Should the elementary education of the masses or the higher education of the upper classes be provided?
- (2) Should the Oriental or Western learning be emphasized?
- (3) Should the oriental language or English be the medium of instruction?
- (4) Should the state or any other agency be responsible for education?

Progress of Education (1813-1833):

During the period from 1813 to 1833, education was expanded. The responsibility for expanding education fell on the Company. It was asked to spend at least one lakh rupees per year on education. The Company had not been given any specific instruction on this issue. Consequently, the direction of education remained uncertain during these 30 years due to the following:

1. *The Medium of Instruction.* It could not be decided whether the medium of instruction should be English or Indian languages. There were many developed languages in the country, such as Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and many others. So the question arose as to which languages should be taken up as the medium of instruction. Many groups with divergent views on this issue came to the surface.
2. *System of Education.* Allied to former question was another issue: how to expand English education in the country.
3. *Aim of Education.* This was the problem to solve. Should education be made available to all, or should it be given to only a selected few?
4. *Measures.* What measures should be adopted for reforms of the prevailing system of education? This was a controversial issue. Should education be within the strict control of the government or should it be run by some forthcoming" private enterprises?

The territorial boundary of the East India Company was gradually expanding, so it became essential for it to issue another notification. In 1833, the notification concerning education in India. The following facts were notable in the notification:

1. The missionaries of all the countries were given the facility of preaching their religion in India.
2. The Governor of Bengal was made superior to the Governors of other provinces, and his policies were to be followed by others.

3. Any Indian or natural citizen of the emperor's territory was not to be appointed to any service or post on the basis of caste, creed, or any other consideration.
4. Education grant was raised to Rs. 1, 00,000 from Rs. 10,000.
5. In the Council of the Governor-General, a fourth member *i.e.*, Law Member was added.
6. In due course of time, the provision of this Charter influenced the education in India to a very great extent. This Charter of 1833 occupies a very important place in the history of Indian education.

Ways of Grant Utilization. Macaulay made a declaration stating the ways of expenditure of the money granted for education in India. The following points are worth mentioning in this regard:

1. The British Government's main aim is to spread European literature and Science among Indians, and so all the money granted for education will be spent for that purpose.
2. Oriental institutions will not be closed, and their teachers and students shall continue to receive their pay and scholarships as usual.
3. Oriental literature will not be published in the future as sufficient money has been spent on this item.
4. The money, thus saved, will be spent in the spread of English literature and Science among Indians through the English medium.

This declaration decided the policy, medium, means, and aims of education in India as adopted by the British Government. The Governor-General himself was an admirer of English education. Therefore, with the assistance of Lord Macaulay, he had the opportunity to express his views. He thought that many social evils would end with the development of English education.

Changes Enforced in Indian Education:

As is clear from the text of the resolution of March 7, 1835, the following changes were enforced in Indian education by it:

1. European literature and science will be propagated among the Indians.
2. Funds will be employed only for encouraging English education.
3. Future allocation of funds to oriental students and teachers will be stopped.
4. No funds will be available for printing of oriental works.
5. The medium of education will be English.

Causes of Failure:

This failed as a government policy in India due to the following reasons:

1. *Expansion of Mass Education.* The Government began to increase the number of English schools. It was, however, unable to provide jobs to all the educated Indians. Naturally many of them started new schools to get themselves employed. This began to create more job seekers.
2. *Awakening.* As the number of schools increased a lot this system only fulfilled the need of education of the common people. Educated on Western lines some people were of wide vision and without caring for Government services and self interest they started schools for educating general public. Thus; an awakening took place. People became conscious of their real status. Later on led by Mahatma Gandhi they played leading roles in the National movement and the British rulers had to leave India.

Conclusion:

The Act of 1813 was significant for various reasons. It meant the triumph of the theory of free trade. The Act scrapped the Company's monopolistic right of trade with India and allowed all His Majesty's subjects to compete for Indian trade. The Act also marked the victory of public opinion and defeat of the defenders of the Company's privileges. The policy of free trade heralded the ruin of Indian textile industry. The country-made coarse cloth could not compete with the fine mill-made cloth of Lancashire. With the decline of the textile industry, India's economy became purely agricultural. In short, free trade proved a boon for British trade. Provision for the promotion of western education in India proved a blessing in disguise for the British Government. Promotion of the study of English enabled the rulers to get cheap clerks. The Indians educated in English schools began to hate their own culture and admire everything that came from the west.

The coming of British missionaries to India for propagating their religion had also far-reaching effects. They built churches and ran hospitals and missionary schools. Their activities in due course spread such an infection among ignorant Indians that many of them embraced Christianity. Swami Dayanand and Swami Vivekanand in later years took a serious view of this growing danger and they did glorious work to check the expansion of Christianity in the country.

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